VIRTUAL OFFERING PLATE

SCAN ME

DIRECTIONS

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP

Sundays:

10:30am: Choral Eucharist – also available for our online congregation. Click this link for more information: Worship Online

Returning In The Future:

10:30am: Sunday School & Infant Care

8:00am: Spoken Eucharist – *We will announce when this will start again.*

12:30pm: Joyful Noise! *1st Sunday of the month – 30 min. interactive service for all ages, and especially appropriate for children with special needs.*

6:00pm: Last Chance Mass...on the Grass!* **mid-May to mid-Sept (weather permitting)*

Parents with little ones: *We have in our worship space the "Kidzone" – featuring a play pen, rocking chairs, a*

"The Serpent Was Right!"

March 1, 2020: May God's words be spoken, may God's words be heard. Amen.

As I was considering our text from Genesis this morning, I remembered that a few years ago, this headline appeared on an online satirical website. It read: *"The Bible story is just a hoax. I didn't cause the fall of man – it's fake news. Apples for all!" – Belly-Crawling Snake."* The article, written by Michael Egan, continued, starting with the usual newspaper notation of where it was written. It went like this.

"HELL – The Biblical serpent claimed last night that it was not responsible for the catastrophic Fall of Man recorded in Genesis. "Wasn't me," the Serpent hissed emphatically in an interview aired on Megyn Kelly on Sunday. "Sure, it might have been me, but it also could have been a lot of other fabled beasts. The Chimera. The Kraken. Even a 400 lb gorilla sitting in a white house somewhere. [...] Acknowledging multiple stories identifying it as the talking snake responsible for all human sin, the Serpent said that the "unsubstantiated allegations" were based on "a single anonymous Biblical source" whose "unreliability" had been proved many times before..."[1]

Now, we all know this is in jest, but the thing is...the serpent – oh let's give the poor fellow a name...let's call him Sam. Anyway, Sam, the serpent, has a point!

Before we get to that though, I think Sam deserves better than what we have done to him in art through the centuries. When you picture Sam in your mind, you are probably imagining all the religious imagery of a gigantic snake twisted around a big tree, or perhaps you conjure up the snakes you have personally encountered. But the thing is, when God found out what happened, the punishment for Sam was... no legs! Remember, the Almighty said, "You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life." Well, for that to be a punishment, it must mean it wasn't the case before. So now, when you picture Sam, think of a gigantic serpent with legs to stand on! Let that sink into your nightmare scenarios.

And, Sam seemed to have a good brain too (being declared the craftiest of all the wild creatures God had made), and apparently a decent personality too, or I doubt those silly first humans would have spent so much time talking to him in the first place. And...most of all...Sam was right.

In that dialog by the tree, Sam told them the truth– okay, for perhaps selfish reasons, we really don't know – despite the news spoof earlier, nobody actually recorded a direct interview with Sam afterwards. Anyway, the conversation starts with Sam asking Eve what God said about eating from the trees in the garden, and Eve said that they could eat of any except the one in the middle, because God said that one would make them die. And Sam replied, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

They did eat. Their eyes were opened. They didn't die. Sam the Serpent was right – Case closed. Now that old Sam is in the clear, what about Eve? Well folks, as feminists for decades have been saying: Eve was framed! Adam was there with the snake the whole time.

While I have altered the text we read in church to make this fact more clear: even the NRSV says it too, though most people don't pay attention to it. It reads, "She took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, *who was with her*, and he ate." So, not for nothin', Adam is equally at fault here. Yet when God comes walking around, the first thing Adam does is point the finger at Eve, and said "She made me do it!" I mean, I wish God had done like so many parents do in these situations and said, "If Eve had told you to jump off a cliff, would you have done that too?"

I totally get how God might have seen this act of sabotage, because when I find someone in my house had an "accident," it seems awfully fishy when my dog Lexi tries to point a paw in the direction of Katie or Lauren, her feline sisters.

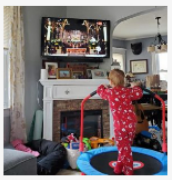
So now we know the truth – Adam was there with Eve and Sam, and nobody shoved that dang apple down his throat, nor did he counter anything that Sam was saying. In fact, Adam, for all the way we talk about him, was basically a lame counterpart to Eve. Maybe that is why Sam talked to *her*, not to him...go right to the top as they say, and don't bother with the lower level folks.

Of course, all these things matter only if this story is to be taken at face value – which folks, I want to emphasize – it should not. Yet, not only has good old Sam been thrown under the ecclesiastical bus, but women through the centuries have endured the church's patriarchy and misogyny directed at Eve and all women because of this story.

So, to set the record straight: The serpent was right. Eve was framed. Adam acted like a baby. And God sent them all for the longest timeout in the history of the universe, or as some call it – The Fall.

But is that really what this story is all about? That we were cast away into a cosmic timeout for our sins? Or, as some theologians posit, is this a story about liberation from the bonds of childish naivete? This may seem like some sort of esoteric question best suited for the ivory towers of seminaries and unrelated to our lives today, but this past week, on Ash Wednesday, I invited you on behalf of the Church into a Holy Lent. Lent is about coming home – returning to God – that we might enter into the fullness of relationship with our creator who loves us beyond measure. And this story, placed right in the front of our biblical canon, right at the beginning of Lent, is all about relationship – it is a metaphor for the beginning of our relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation. So let's have a closer look.

NEED TO JOIN US ONLINE?



ONLINE PLEDGE CARD!

Every Perfect Gift

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OUR CALENDAR

Today | Wednesday, Au

Wednesday, August 31
4:00pm Bolshoi Mus
Sunday, September 4
10:30am Holy Euchar
Tuesday, September 6
7:30pm Vestry Meet
Wednesday, September 7
4:00pm Bolshoi Mus
Thursday, September 8
7:30pm PFLAG
8:00pm Adult Choir
Sunday, September 11
10:30am Holy Euchar

Events shown in time zone: Eastern Time - New York

Google Calendar

play mat, crayons, toys, and picture books for little ones.

In his book *A Rabbi Reads The Bible*, Jonathan Magonet explores the varying views on this story and suggests that "...far from being a 'fall from grace,' the eating of the fruit and the subsequent expulsion from Eden was ultimately a great liberation, for it gave the 'children' in Eden the chance to grow up. God cut the strings of the puppets and let them walk erect upon the earth."[2]

I would agree, but it might be hard to imagine if you were raised to believe otherwise...unless, of course, you remember what it was like to be a child, or are a parent, yourself. Because the parent-child relationship is really the core of what this whole apple eating, garden exiting, thing is about.

A comic sketch I heard once put this story this way "After creating heaven and earth, God created Adam and Eve. And the first thing the First Parent said to the first children was "Don't."
"Don't what?" Adam replied.
"Don't eat the forbidden fruit."
"Forbidden fruit? Really? Where is it?"
"It's over there," said God, wondering why he hadn't stopped after making the elephants. A few minutes later, God saw the kids having an apple break, and God was angry. "Didn't I tell you not to eat that fruit?"

"Uh-huh," Adam replied.

"Then why did you do it?"

"I dunno."
God's punishment, was that Adam and Eve should have children of their own."[3]

Parents, good ones anyway, love their children. Sure, they get exasperated by them at times, even angry, disappointed, and all the rest, but they love them, and want what is best for them – even if what is best for them is to put them in a timeout and pour themselves a great big glass of wine after the kids go to bed.

And as difficult as child rearing can be, parents hope those kids don't grow up too fast. Still, they know that one day, save for a special few, their kids will need to leave home and be the adults they were born to be. And parents pray that when that day comes, they will have prepared their children well. Yes, they will get hurt, and hurt one another too, but they will never live into their full potential if they remain children all their lives. And so they wave goodbye, and sometimes even have to do some pushing to get them out the door. The relationship will change as they grow, but always it is hoped that the relationship deepens and becomes more meaningful for both parent and child.

And all of that is where this story from Genesis intersects with us today, for I agree with Rabbi Magonet – this was no fall, but more like a push out the door – or garden gates, as it were. Think about it – if God didn't want this to eventually happen, where was the childproofing in the garden? I mean, putting that tree there was the modern day equivalent of putting a plate of cookies on the table, uncovered, and telling your kids not to touch them – FOREVER! Like THAT is going to happen. And here's the tell on that. It was only *after* God pushed them out of the garden gates that the Almighty figured it might be good to put safeguards around those cookies, I mean, that tree – though I think God went a bit overboard with the flaming sword flashing back and forth – a bit dramatic, don't ya think Lord? Anyway, God had to know that placing that tree there in the middle of the garden with children was essentially setting those kids up, because even God admits they didn't know good from evil. Remember that it was *after* they ate the apples that God said "They [have] now become like one of us (note the plural here), knowing good and evil."

So, humanity grew up – sooner than God would have wanted for us – sooner than we were ready – before we really understood the concepts of good and evil that were thrust into our consciousness – hence the state of the world through the ages. And ever since that time, God has tried to help us understand what it means for us to be made in God's image – even while we were yet too immature to understand and respond the way God would have hoped for us and for the world.

Sam the serpent was right – we didn't die – in fact, we took our first steps in living. This wasn't a fall – it was a push – perhaps a bit before we were really ready, perhaps before God was ready. So what have we learned from all of this? Well a few things about the way the church has used this text, and what needs to change.

First, as we enter today into Women's History month – stop blaming Eve, and for that matter, all women for something Adam also did in a metaphorical story. That's just the misogynism of the church and it must end now.

Second, the idea of original sin, outside of trying to be really creatively original in your wrongdoing, is nonsense. You begin in this world with the innocence of the heavens. What happens afterward, well, that's another story, but until we are old enough to know right from wrong, we are still inside the proverbial garden gates.

And perhaps most importantly, this life on the other side of childhood – on the other side of the garden gates – while scary at times, gives us the freedom to grow every day, and every generation – and with that, to enter into an even deeper and more meaningful relationship with God through the centuries. For just as children love their parents, but are able to deepen that relationship as adults, so too do we go from Sunday School children to adults seekers, from ancient near Eastern understanding of nature and God to where we are today. Even Jesus said that there were truths we were not ready to hear in his time.

And so, through the ages, God has continually sought right relationship with us, sending us prophets to teach and guide us. But when we had drifted so far from what God dreams for us that it seemed we might never find our way home, God became like one of us to remind us of who we are, that we might live as we are meant to in the world, and be in right relationship with our creator. And one of the things Jesus taught us is that the kingdom of God – that place where we dwell with God – that proverbial garden – it's not gone! It's all around us.

Isn't that a kicker... think about that! If the kingdom of God is here as Jesus tells us, and if the garden was that beloved kingdom, then the garden is where we are now! We just left the gates of one section, to journey on into another. And we will know we have become lost when we are unable to see this garden blossoming in unexpected ways all around us. Something that happens to us all as we engage in this chaotic world.

The story in Genesis is a metaphor for the beginning of our relationship with God – a relationship that continues to this day. We outgrew our childish ways, and were pushed into another part of God's creation, but God didn't abandon us there – God went with us! And from that time on, God continually yearns to deepen Her relationship with us – to remind us from whence we came, that we might become all that She dreams for us.

Lent is when we allow ourselves to be shaken out of our busy lives that we might begin to notice what is right there in front of us – our God trying to get our attention – that we might see the garden around us, and remember who we are – the beloved children of God.

So I invite you once more, on behalf of the church, into a Holy Lent. I pray you take this time to remember that God created you *for* good, because you *are* good – and that if you are having trouble seeing the kingdom of God in your life, God's garden of joy and love meant for you, then it is

time for you to come home.

To come home here – where God will always leave the porch light on for you.

Amen.

For the audio from the 10:30am service, click below, or subscribe to our iTunes Sermon Podcast by clicking here:

Sermon Podcast

00:00 00:00

[1] Michael Egan, https://www.humortimes.com/62175/eden-serpent-fall-of-man/

[2] Magonet, Jonathan. *A Rabbi Reads The Bible*, New Edition. , p.132.

[3] Bill Cosby.

The Rev. Diana L. Wilcox
Christ Church in Bloomfield & Glen Ridge
March 1, 2020
Lent 1
1st Reading – Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7
Psalm 32
2nd Reading – Romans 5:12-19
Gospel – Matthew 4:1-11

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"Spiritual & Religious" →

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Mother Diana On Slate For Bishop Of Ohio

Fall Founder's Fest – Oct 2

Blessing of the Animals – Oct 8

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